

# critical digest

Vol. II No. 31

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

## Daily Critics Rate the New Show

The Liar-Broadhurst, 5/18/50. Alfred Drake and Edward Eager's new version of the 18th century Goldoni play received two mild and ten sharp notices. Dash of Women's Wear Daily is convinced that the musical could be turned into a hit if the lag-gard book was speeded up and if some of the dull spots were eliminated. Hawkins, World Telegram and Sun, enjoyed the entire first act, but thought the second was heavy going. Garland, Journal American, found a number of things to praise but the sum-total was discouraging. Several suggested author-director Drake might have done better in the title role. Melville Cooper and Paula Lawrence were praised for their small parts. Music was considered better than book, but all loved the lavish scenery. Times and Herald Tribune critics feared the show was a bad mixture of Elizabethan drama and Gilbert and Sullivan.

## Magazine Reviewers View the Plays

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. George Jean Nathan was very specific in listing 18 items he disliked about the new Hartman revue. He found five items of interest, but he didn't think there was much comedy or originality in the revue many of his colleagues found entertaining. Phelan, Commonweal, considers the present production the best organized and most engaging of the Hartman efforts.

A Phoenix Too Frequent and Freight-Fulton, 4/26/50-4/29/50. Phelan, Commonweal, found much delight in Fry's Phoenix, but she felt it needed editing. Critic thought young producers, Scheuer and Carson, suffered from editorial confusion in pairing the blank verse playlet with White's Freight. She is looking forward to the coming production of The Lady's Not For Burning to learn if Fry is a writer of words or a writer of thought.

## Report from Paris

Clurman, New Republic critic and Broadway director, was surprised Cry of the Peacock folded in New York. After seeing the original version in Paris he is convinced it is specifically too French to be exportable. The French production of A Streetcar Named Desire he found unspeakable; even worse than the production of French plays in New York. The French theatre, he comments, is living on old securities, revivals of 25 year old plays are abundant. The 46 current productions include many experimental revivals.

## Broadway Hits Revisited

Albert Dekker's portrayal of Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman disappointed Hobe, Variety, the sole critic to cover the replacement for Gene Lockhart in the lead. Though he expected the actor to improve, at present his performance only scratches the surface. Mildred Dunnock and Arthur Kennedy emerge now as the key element in the situation...Ray Bolger continues to be brilliant in Where's Charley?, Hawkins, WT&S, discovered on a visit to a Wednesday matinee. The show seems to be a magic cure-all for all sorts of former irksome, chronic annoyances...Vera Bryner, alternate star of The Consul, enchanted Garland, Journal American. She has a femininity that is just as effective as the harshness of Patricia Neway.

## Critical Notes

Kapoo Phelan, Commonweal, bows out after five years of reviewing for the Catholic lay journal. In her final column she wrote that the magazine was becoming too dilettante for a person who is just interested in the drama as a professional critic.

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' The Green Room Department '  
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**CRITICS ON CRITICS...**Variety's annual poll of the N.Y. daily critics choices showed the reviewers liked Alec Guinness, Patricia Neway, Shirley Booth, Marcia Henderson and Jo Mielziner, among others. When asked their opinion of current criticism they almost all agreed it was fine. Hawkins, WT&S, thought the quality was undistinguished because the subject matter has not been stimulating. Morehouse said the quality was all right. Pollock. Compass, sees the criticism on the same level as recent years. Atkinson, Times, wrote "without exception brilliant." Chapman, News, still likes shows others don't. Garland, Journal American, discovered he enjoyed so many shows his colleagues didn't that he considers resigning as the squarest peg in the drama critics circle. Garland thinks the Variety box score is senseless.

**TV RUNAWAYS...**The future of the theatre depends on the actors and writers brave and rich enough to run away from TV, Pollock, Compass, predicted. After the novelty of TV has worn off, people will realize there are other things to do than watch a flickering screen for the rest of their lives. Man, Pollock is sure, was not made to spend his life exclusively in a sitting position.

**HAMS & HAMS...**Shirley Booth, winner of the Barter Theater award of a Virginia ham and an acre of land on a Virginia mountainside, admitted on NBC 'Voices and Events' that she has realized two of her dearest ambitions. She always wanted to be a good actress and she always wanted to be a Southerner. The co-star of Come Back, Little Sheba picked Gaby Rodgers and Jerry Rifkin for jobs this summer in the Barter Theater.

**IDEA OF THE WEEK...**Bermuda needs theatre, Morehouse, WT&S, muses after a quick trip to the mid-ocean isle. The answer is for the airlines to fly some professionals down for a few performances of Dear Ruth or Peer Gynt to see if there is any response. If so, it can be made a permanent tour stop.

**CRITICS PAN CLOSING...**Sheaffer, Eagle, and Seldes, WNEW 'Lively Arts', condemn the closing of The Innocents. Both think the show deserved a longer run. Seldes likes to see the public make up its own mind, but he thinks it is making a mistake in ignoring this fine drama.

**HOW TO BE AN ANGEL...**Because the role of the investor is over-glamorized, Chapman, News, touted his imaginary student off to see the printer who will help him place a bet at Belmont instead of investing \$750 in a show. If the man is silly enough to invest, he is advised not to watch the critics on opening night. If they laugh, they might rip it to pieces in the reviews, and vice versa.

**PLAYWRIGHTS ON TV...**Moss Hart's WNET 'Answer Yes or No' drew mixed notices. Gould, Times, compared program to 'Information Please'. Variety and Crosby, Herald Tribune, panned show. Latter said it was as bad as the worst of daytime radio. Minoff, Cue, wonders when Hart and Kaufmann, who is shown weekly on CBS 'This Is Show Business', will get time to write any more plays.

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' Random Items '  
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Peter Pan is to be discod by Columbia Records, Tickets, Please! by Mercury... Theatre Disc Club rents the long playing records of the shows for \$2.30 for three days...Theatre in the Round at Edison Hotel will have a bar and refreshments...N.Y. Herald Tribune Public Notice: "Women of Leisure for Experimental Society Stage. Experience Unnecessary G 17."...Ten percent of profits of new Theatrical Syndicate Agency will go to theatre charities...South Pacific, claims the Dictaphone Company, was written by Rodgers, Hammerstein and Logan, on a trio of the concern's newest time savers.

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' Meet the Critics '  
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Want to be a drama critic? Be in the right place at the right time is the simple advice of William Hawkins, WTAS, revealed to the Hartmans. They interviewed him on their WOR program broadcast from the Coronet Theatre where they are starring in Tickets Please! Hawkins first met the dancing team when he did the "Tips on Tables" column for the WTAS before the war. Before that he had spent five years at the University of Virginia studying law and a few terms as story editor for Hollywood studios. He was stationed in Iran and Jamaica while he was in the Intelligence Corps of the Navy during the war. Back at the WTAS he handled various assignments on the Entertainment staff. When the drama critic left suddenly, Hawkins was assigned to the opening at 5:00 P.M. It was the Old Vic's Henry IV, and he has been the paper's critic since. Reviewing is only one fifth of his work. He tries to gather interviews of interesting, behind-the-scenes personalities. Hawkins' interview with the Hartmans appeared three days after the broadcast.

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' Interview Round Up '  
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**SALLY DEUTSCH...**Theatre Arts editor is justly proud of the fact that she built the circulation of the magazine from 6,000 to near 100,000, she told Rice, Post. The magazine is edited for theatre lovers who can't attend the theatre regularly. The largest part of the subscribers live out of New York, most in California and the middle west region. She hopes some day to be able to work with the League of New York Theatres and the unions to encourage more young people to attend the theatre via student matinees.

**MARLON BRANDO...**You can always tell how unemployed an actor is by how well he's dressed, the young actor known for his T shirts and blue jeans revealed to Wilson, Post. The jobless are in white shirt and tie looking for work. He doesn't dress like a laborer for publicity, it's just more comfortable. Contrary to reports he does own a suit, also eight shirts, some sweaters and jackets and three pairs of pants.

**SYLVIA SIEGLER...**"Show of the Month" club boss doesn't think she performs any miracle in picking the hits before they open, she said on WOR Barbara Welles when she gave the club's monthly award to Walter Abel. She studies the play and the people who will produce it for days before deciding if she will pick it as a selection for her club. "Show of the Month" club books are closing at 5,000 members, but, a "Preview" club has been formed.

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' Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '  
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times                | 11. Newark News         | 21. Catholic World  |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune       | 12. Women's Wear Daily  | 22. Commonweal      |
| 3. NY News                 | 13. Daily Worker        | 23. Cue             |
| 4. NY Mirror               | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Star, PM)   | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post                 | 16. George Jean Nathan  | 26. Newsweek        |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse)      | 17. Morning Telegraph   | 27. Time            |
| 8. NY Journal American     | 18. Variety             | 28. Nation          |
| 9. NY World Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard           | 29. New Republic    |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle         | 20. Theatre Arts        | 30. New Yorker      |

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-14-15-17-19-23-24-30. Con: 1-7-8-16-18-20-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-20-22-26-29. Con: 1-2-23-24-25-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-17-19-20-21-23-27-30. Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-20-23-24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-20-22-23-26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29. None: 20-21

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-26-27-30.

The Devil's Disciple-Royale, 2/21/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-20-22-23-24-27-29. So-So: 16. Con: 30.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28. So-So: 16-22-27. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30. None: 13-21.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/1/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-5-16-20-22-27-29-30. None: 13.

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30. None: 21.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

Lost in the Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-26. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-9-10-11-12-15-17-18-23-24-26-27-29. Con: 8-30. So-So: 6-7-14-19.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-26-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23. None: 5-10-11-13-14-16-22-28-29.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hollinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 28.

The Wisteria Tree-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 1-3-4-5-6-8-11-12-14-15-17-19-24. Con: 2-7-9-10-16-22-23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-12-17. Con: 11.

